

“THE DILIGENCE OF THE AUTHOR TO KNOW ALL THINGS”: LITERARY TRADITION
AND MARGINAL DISCOURSE IN WILLIAM BALDWIN’S *BEWARE THE CAT*

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ABSTRACT

“THE DILIGENCE OF THE AUTHOR TO KNOW ALL THINGS”: LITERARY TRADITION AND MARGINAL DISCOURSE IN WILLIAM BALDWIN’S *BEWARE THE CAT*

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William Baldwin’s *Beware the Cat* experiments with early modern literary genre and marks a transitional period in rhetoric and in political reform. *Beware the Cat* confronts issues of textual authority among a novice English readership, especially in the conversion of orality to manuscript and manuscript to print. Baldwin’s satire, while pointed towards the topic of religious reformation, parodies several of the most commonplace genres available in early modern England. Moreover, Baldwin’s integration of a highly critical marginal gloss acts to destabilize his entire narrative and ultimately alludes to the need for more discerning and educated reading practices. Currently, scholarship on *Beware the Cat* is limited to examining the discussion of religious reform and how the text integrates various genres of writing. My thesis explores the literary genres that Baldwin utilizes throughout the text such as broadside ballads, occult writings, and beast fables, and examines how he questions their merit in the marginal gloss. However, I also focus on the source materials that Baldwin references in his narrative and explore how he retells different plots to highlight what he views as a corrupt religious institution that shares a similar method of conversion to the occult. Further, the conversation between the host narrative and the marginal gloss serves to question the validity of texts that rely on hearsay

and to undermine their authoritative strategies. I also concentrate on how the relationship between the narrative and marginal gloss exemplifies the type of critical discourse Baldwin believes is necessary to determine if a text is fallacious or supported by credible evidence.

INTRODUCTION

In *A Marvelous History Entitled Beware the Cat, Containing Diverse Wonderful and Incredible Matters Very Pleasant and Merry to Read* (1561), often called the first English novel, William Baldwin (d. ca. 1563) creates an experiment in literary genre that transitions between multiple styles of writing and juggles the topics of politics, religion, science, and the occult. In its conception, *Beware the Cat* confronts issues of textual authority and England's gradual conversion from an oral tradition to a print tradition. Baldwin parodies several types of Renaissance writing; these parodies showcase Baldwin's extensive knowledge of the printing industry. The text mocks the fledgling understanding of textual authority among a novice readership, critically analyzing the types of stories being evaluated and questioning the objectivity or value of the storytellers. As a textual artifact, *Beware the Cat* provides intricate arguments against several Catholic practices and acts as a pivotal piece of writing for understanding the Reformation. In his efforts to uncover papal corruption, Baldwin incorporates several stories that portray Catholic characters as foolish or deceitful. Each of these individual stories retells a particular fable. Further, Baldwin accents the sections that involve a religious figure. In *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin displays innovative textual practices. Significantly, he applies marginal gloss as a form of intra-textual discourse, not simply as a form of explanatory writing. The issue of textual authority underlies the effervescent feuding between Gregory Streamer as a narrative force and Baldwin as the author and editor of the text. Baldwin uses the work's sophisticated style of argumentation and textual arrangement to engage the primary questions raised by Reformation texts. In doing so, Baldwin subverts textual authority in general and the propaganda of the Catholic Church specifically by manufacturing a literary patchwork of

different genres of popular print including ballads, herbals, and fables and he exposes each as unreliable.

William Baldwin is an interesting figure in the annals of English literature, acting, throughout his career, as “a poet, printer, prose writer, and preacher” (Ringler Jr. and Flachmann xv). Unfortunately, there is little known about Baldwin’s life. Both the precise date of his birth and the names of his parents are unknown. The earliest confirmed biographical information available places Baldwin as “an assistant to the publisher Edward Whitchurch from 1547 until 1553” (xv). Whitchurch (d. 1562), like Baldwin, was a firm supporter of the Protestant Reformation and issued one of the earliest editions of the English Bible. While working for Whitchurch, Baldwin was able to publish a variety of writing such as pamphlets, essays, poetry, and plays. It was during the transitional period following the death of Edward VI and the rule of Queen Mary that Baldwin began his work on his most interesting contribution to English literature, *Beware the Cat*. His most famous work during the early modern period, *A Mirror for Magistrates*, garnered attention among royalty and courtiers, and another twenty-five editions were printed by 1651 (xv). Because of its continuous presence among English readership, *A Mirror for Magistrates* is Baldwin’s most recognizable contribution to literature. In contrast, *Beware the Cat*, despite being the first original work of longer prose fiction in English, has been relatively neglected by scholarship (xiv). Though Baldwin completed *Beware the Cat* in 1553, he was unable to publish it until 1561, because of the text’s blatant criticism of Catholicism. After Baldwin’s death, *Beware the Cat* was reprinted two times, once in 1570 and again in 1584. Currently, only the 1570 and 1584 versions of the text are available, and the 1584 edition contains a supplementary note to the reader about the text’s contents. Although Baldwin did not publish as actively during Mary’s reign as he had during Edward’s brief tenure, he “continued

offering his plays for performance at the court of Queen Mary” (xx). Finally, during Elizabeth’s ascension, Baldwin distanced himself from satire and writing plays and chose to be ordained as a deacon. After a brief career as a priest, Baldwin was counted among the casualties of an outbreak of the plague in 1563.

The amount of scholarship directly associated with Baldwin’s *Beware the Cat* is limited. In particular, many scholars focus on *Beware the Cat* as a source of religious philosophy that favors Protestant reformation and deconstructs elements of Catholicism. However, some scholars have analyzed *Beware the Cat* as a cultural artifact that experiments with ideas of form and genre. Some scholars have utilized the text in an effort to understand the political shift from the reign of Edward VI to that of Mary I. In an effort to understand why Baldwin’s text fell out of favor, for example, Robert Maslen locates the text in a political moment in which printing anti-Catholic sentiments became increasingly difficult and often led to severe punishment. While *Beware the Cat* raises questions the validity of the Catholic Church as authoritative force in England, I argue that Baldwin’s best arguments situate Catholic rhetoric and storytelling alongside occult rumors and outlines their shared methods of persuasion or conversion. Maslen goes on to argue that Baldwin’s juxtaposition of occult stories with Catholic tales of miracles highlights the dubious nature of early modern conversion narratives. However, Maslen stops short of claiming that *Beware the Cat* portrays equates these types of stories and that they are prone to the same shortcomings. Robert Schwegler focuses on *Beware the Cat* as a tool for societal exchange, specifically because the narrative shows citizens from different classes interacting without issue. Although *Beware the Cat* relies on the cultural exchange of citizens from different classes, Baldwin specifically questions the credibility of eyewitnesses that are simply identified as a “churl” (Baldwin 12). In a similar manner, Stephen Greesham discusses

Beware the Cat as a sophisticated example of satirical style, comparable to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1501) and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). While *Utopia* and *Beware the Cat* share a similar narrative style and utilize para-textual devices such as letters to promote authority, Baldwin's text disputes itself repeatedly, and Baldwin utilizes this dispute to question what constitutes textual authority. Following Maslen and Greesham, Peter Berek suggests that *Beware the Cat* continues an Edwardian tradition that allowed anti-Catholic print to flourish. *Beware the Cat* does praise Edwardian convictions and champions Protestant ideas, but I argue that the text focuses on dismantling the assumed authority of both the Catholic Church and the texts that take part in the same sort of faulty reasoning. Terence Bowers and Edward Bonahue Jr. view *Beware the Cat* as a complicated weave of narrative style and as an instrument of cultural change. Additionally, Bowers analyzes Baldwin's marked departure from an oral tradition towards a print-based society. While many scholars discuss the cultural and religious views in the text, few navigate Baldwin's allusions to popular texts as a rhetorical device. I argue that the language, in both the body text and the marginal gloss, parodies textual authority and exposes several dominant literary styles of the early modern period as unauthoritative and based in superstition. Additionally, I argue that Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia in the novel explains Baldwin's method of creating a discourse between narrator and gloss. Further, while scholars agree that *Beware the Cat* developed from Edwardian politics, the growth of print culture in the Renaissance is not discussed in much detail.

Similarly, little has been done to discuss *Beware the Cat*'s focus on disrupting the notion of authority, especially in the transitory period between an oral culture and a print dominated society. Bowers begins the argument by examining the text as a cultural artifact, but few suggest the argument that Baldwin's text is as much of a historical narrative as a cultural reflection.

Bowers' research outlines how the novel is "a highly wrought satire that playfully explores the psychological and social effects of textual and oral communication and the potential role of the printed book in society" (3). In contrast, I posit that *Beware the Cat*'s most significant literary contribution revolves around its disruption of narrative authority, using the various tails of Streamer's narrative to question the validity of sources, the expertise of ballads and herbals, and the credulity that untrained readers are prone to.

To understand Baldwin's principal arguments in *Beware the Cat* fully, we should first familiarize ourselves with the religious issues that Baldwin confronts throughout the text. While the novel marks a transitory period between manuscript and print culture, it also falls halfway between two very diverse religious movements: Edward VI's push for Protestant Reformation and Mary's attempts to counter the Reformation's successes.

The reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) signaled both a rise in the production and dissemination of Protestant ideals and texts and a reduction of censorship for those texts that supported reformation. While Edward as a boy-king shared most of his governing responsibilities with several of his mentors, he became a symbol for criticizing the papacy and empowering Protestants. Even his first writing, penned between 1548 and 1549, marked a different attitude towards Rome, which is represented as a foreign authority meddling in England's politics. His language can be viewed as a precursor for Baldwin's own inflammatory work, "shown by the fact that he let his argument carry him into irreverence" (Chapman 171-72). Under Edward's rule, the Catholic Church's power was severely limited and ushered in a period where writings concerning religious reform were welcomed, especially if the writing coincided with opinions of the king and his court. One of Edward's most prominent contributions to Protestant Reformation came in the form of his *Book of Common Prayer*, first published in 1549,

which he later revised to incorporate new policies concerning church services and practices (Bowers 21). Edward's writing continued to drive reform, including a mandate that sermons would be performed in vernacular instead of Latin. Several Catholic traditions were similarly attacked and criticized throughout England:

The concept of blessing things, epiclesis, manual acts accompanying words of institution, the sign of the cross in baptism, exorcism and chrism in baptism, chrism in visitations of the sick, mass vestments, the use of the chancel, wafer bread and its being placed in the mouth of communicants, all prayers for the dead Of these, all except the rejection of the sign of the cross in baptism were incorporated into the revised Prayer Book in 1552. (Loach 122)

England, under the rule of Edward and his supporters, noticeably changed its attitude towards papal authority. Additionally, the constant demand for new editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the translated Bible ensured England's printing presses were in a constant state of production. More so than under his father, Henry VIII, Edward's advisors were eager to take the "first step toward a church purged of corrupt and superstitious practices" (Beer 23). Edward's efforts during his short tenure as monarch, though sometimes controversial, managed to create a firm foundation for permanent national religious reform.

In contrast, Mary's tenure upon the English throne (1553-1558) initiated a series of Counter-Reformation efforts and led to the persecution many of the most outspoken figures of Edward's reign. Due to the rapid shifts in policy, many dissenters remained from Edward's reign when England had been seen internationally as a Protestant kingdom. By the end of Mary's rule, the retribution against Protestants for their actions against the Catholic Church "led to the burning of around 300 Protestant men and women between 1555 and 1558" (Marshall 583).

These actions, though equal in measure to the Protestant attacks against Catholics during Edward's reign, stirred more of England's populace to engage in seditious acts. The acts of the Counter-Reformation also influenced two of Baldwin's strongest supporters, who assisted him in his anti-Catholic stances: "Baldwin's employer Edward Whitchurch and his friend John Day had been arrested . . . for seditious tracts" ("Cat Got Your Tongue" 23). Both Whitchurch and Day were ultimately able to escape unaffected, but other writers and printers were not as lucky. Many of the presses that had liberally printed anti-Catholic rhetoric stymied their production, while others faced greater scrutiny because of the materials that they had reproduced before Mary took the throne. Mary's Counter-Reformation had an unintended effect towards positioning England as a Protestant power (Shrank 8). Mary's attempts to subvert Edward's addendums to church law failed. However, the backlash against these attempts caused the unplanned consolidation of "the forces of reform and [laid] the basis for a lasting anti-Catholic myth of Protestant national identity" (Marshall 583). In effect, while Mary's father and brother initiated England's rejection of papal authority, the Counter-Reformation finally spurred England's transformation into a fully Protestant nation.

It is important to note that *Beware the Cat*, in its attempt to dispute print authority, confounds the reader as to who exactly is in charge of the text. In *Beware the Cat* three authoritative figures either supplement or contradict each other: Gregory Streamer, the first person narrator; William Baldwin, the author; and G.B., the editor and marginal commenter. Baldwin inserts a fictionalized version of himself in the text that further confuses the notion of who is truly in charge of the text. Initially, the reader is led to believe that Gregory Streamer, the principal narrator of the text, is in charge of the overall direction of the story. However, the reader is also acutely aware that the printed copy of *Beware the Cat* is the novelization of the

fictitious Streamer's oration. Unlike Streamer's original oration, Baldwin the author frames the oration between a note to the reader and an exhortation. The author's additions also highlight one of the most important factors in turning an oration into printed text: the ability to review and criticize the text. Additionally, the majority of *Beware the Cat* is supplemented by another authoritative figure, Gulielmus Baldwin the character, who inhabits the text through marginal glosses but is also one of the members present for Streamer's original oration. Unlike other marginal glossers, Baldwin's is an active voice throughout the narration, which also identifies logical fallacies in Streamer's oration and models effective reading strategies for the text. The interaction between William Baldwin, the author and editor, Baldwin, the marginal voice, and Streamer, as primary narrator, frames *Beware the Cat* as more than a Protestant's response towards Catholic practices. Instead, the constant authoritative struggle in the text locates William Baldwin's work in England's transitory period between a primarily oral culture and one that steadily became more dependent on the printed word.

Beware the Cat's primary arguments are mostly situated in Streamer's oration and Baldwin's glossarial voice throughout the narrative. In the first part of the oration, Gregory Streamer attempts to persuade his listeners that cats are creatures that have a very complex society, that he has listened to cats speak, and that he understands their interactions. In his attempts to gain authority, Streamer relies upon several stories of monstrous cats, with varied accounts of their abilities or relationship with witches. In these stories, a particularly large feline, named Grimalkin, becomes central to the debate. Immediately, though, Streamer gets sidetracked and spends the remainder of the first part of the narration pondering the existence of witches. While asserting expertise in the area of witches, werewolves, and other fantastical creatures, Streamer begins to suggest that Catholicism and the occult are closely related. While Streamer

alludes slightly at the beginning of the narrative, G.B.'s glosses and Streamer's later anecdotes emphasize that both occultism and Catholicism's unwritten verities share a similar system of logic, wholly unsupported by fact. Similarly, Baldwin, as the marginal voice, implies that the fantastic and unbelievable nature of the occult stories is identical in reliability to the conversion narratives of the Catholic Church.

The second part of the oration begins with Streamer recalling a particular communion of cats that kept him awake at night. He is still unable to understand the creatures, so the majority of his input is based on speculating what each cat's movement may signify and describing their mannerisms in a similar fashion to the rules of court. Streamer explains that his curiosity was piqued and that, in the interest of knowing what was being said amongst the cats, he remembered something from "Albert Magnus's works...a way how to be able to understand birds' voices" (Baldwin 24). Throughout the rest of the second part of Streamer's narrative, the reader is alerted to Streamer's inability to follow Albertus's directions. Although Streamer describes himself as being an expert on astrological and herbal matters, he directly disobeys the recipe at several points and often does the opposite of what Albertus recommends. Yet, by sheer luck, Streamer is able to improvise a magical potion that allows him to understand the language of cats. Streamer ends the second part of his narrative with a description of his supernatural abilities after consuming the potion, abilities that allow him to "discern all voices, but by means of noises understand none" (32). He follows this declaration with a poetic list of the hilarious and unbelievable collection of sounds that he can now hear, sounds that disrupts his ability to understand individual voices. The magical potion and Streamer's antics to create it reinforce the marginal glosses' earlier assertions concerning the ridiculousness and overall lack of authority of such pseudo-scientific texts. Baldwin, as an author, further cements this point by having

Streamer succeed in the creation of his concoction, despite never following any of Albertus's directions.

The third part of the narrative focuses on Streamer's relating the conversation of the cats that are collected outside his house. In particular, the narrative fixates on a female cat named Mouse-slayer as she recounts the things that she has seen. Through a series of tales that intermingle with the plots of popular beast fables, Mouse-slayer highlights several of the actions of the Catholic Church with which both Streamer and Baldwin as marginal voice have disagreed. Each of the tales attacks a particular principle of the Catholic Church and often ends with the ironic punishment of the figure representing Catholicism. In this manner, Streamer continues to relate the conversation of cats until he decides to rest for the evening. To end his oration, he recounts that, on the next evening, he "harkened at night to other two cats . . . [he] understood never a word" (Baldwin 52). The third narration provides multiple examples of the criticisms that Streamer and Baldwin, as author and commenter, have made of the Catholic Church. Moreover, it reintroduces some of the text's primary complaints in the form of beast fables, making the material easier to understand for a novice reading population.

In this thesis, I focus my discussion of *Beware the Cat* on its role as a work of literature that marks transitional periods in religious reform, print authority, and the dissemination of knowledge. In the first chapter, I explore the various sources that Baldwin incorporates into his novel, especially as they assist his satirical approach of both political and religious issues. Moreover, the first chapter pinpoints some of the critical differences between Baldwin's adaptation of several stories and plots and the source material. I assert that Baldwin's implementation of several diverse writing styles, which includes the "Dedicatory Epistle" and the "Exhortation" that frames the main text, provide insight on how authority is assumed.

Further, Baldwin's marginal gloss perpetually questions the authority of Streamer's sources throughout the "Oration," leading the reader to ponder Streamer's validity as narrator. I add that Baldwin similarly disrupts his own textual authority through the use of para-texts that introduce and close the novel. In the second chapter, I highlight the relationship between Streamer and the self-signed glosser, G.B. The discourse between these two dominant figures provides an example of how Baldwin asserts text should be confronted. While each figure acts as an authority by either framing or directing the direction of the text, all three characters undercut the authority of the text as a whole. G.B. spends most of the novel criticizing Streamer and questioning his ability to narrate appropriately. Similarly, I argue that Streamer's outrageous claims disrupt the overall text's authority, especially when juxtaposed with William Baldwin's attempts, as an author, to frame the text as a credible account of legitimate happenings. The disagreements between Streamer's oration and G.B.'s marginal glosses shape both Baldwin's intended reading of the text and the ongoing issue of textual authority. Moreover, because the text is situated within an intentionally disjointed framework, one that constantly subverts its own authority, Baldwin highlights the issues of print authority when read by an untrained readership.

PARA-TEXT AND PARODY: EARLY MODERN LITERARY TRADITION AND AUTHORIZING PRINT

William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* compiles a myriad of literary styles and artistic tropes to navigate and ultimately question the authority of print culture during the early modern period. Baldwin's experience in the printing and editing industry becomes apparent in the narrative framework of *Beware the Cat*, especially as Baldwin mimics several of the most infamous and pervasive literary voices at the time. Through this extensive parody, Baldwin criticizes the types of literature available and the lack of knowledge among the early modern reading public, which is unable to differentiate between credible ideas and misinformation. In *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin combines aspects of various writing styles common in the early modern period and utilizes examples of pseudo-science and the occult to explore issues of politics and religious reform. Although Baldwin incorporates various genres to identify the types of text available to England's readers, he also plays with editorial practices to display other techniques employed to authorize text. Though the inclusion of a marginal gloss is by far the most apparent tool in Baldwin's arsenal, the application of para-text and the manipulation of lettering aid considerably in presenting other methods for providing the early modern reader with a sense of authenticity or expertise. *Beware the Cat*'s principal narrator, Gregory Streamer, also provides examples of popular practices for the validation of arguments. The type of discourse that Baldwin showcases in *Beware the Cat* resembles what Mikhail Bakhtin classifies as heteroglossia in the novel: "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (324). Just as Baldwin toys with genre in the narrative, he parodies the logic and language of each type of text and utilizes them alongside the marginal gloss to provide a

dialogue about the nature of print authority. The marginal gloss also adds an unusual textual dynamic because the writer is a fictionalized version of William Baldwin, called Guillaume Baldwin (G. B.) in the novel. Baldwin sifts through several genres throughout the main narrative of the text, and each section explores a particular type of writing and the information it typically disseminates to readers. In the first part of the narrative, Streamer mainly incorporates occult stories and studies, especially tales reminiscent of ghost stories and supported by hearsay. The second section of *Beware the Cat* transitions into another famous example of early modern occult theories, the herbal. In the narration, Streamer engages with a well-known figure of herbal writing, Albertus Magnus. In the third section of Streamer's narration, Baldwin combines beast fables with religious anecdotes and gathers ideas from two of the most well-known beast fables: *Aesop's Fables* (1484) and *Reynard the Fox* (1494). Overall, the entire collection of *Beware the Cat*, including its supplementary texts, mimics the format of broadside ballads, the most common printed material during Baldwin's time. By blurring the distinctions between some of the most popular and commonplace literary styles, Baldwin fixates on the authoritative tension surrounding England's transition towards a larger reading public with higher access to the printed word.

At the onset of the early modern period, print and the growth of a culture surrounding its advent as a viable method of public discourse transformed the marketplace, religious ideologies, and political presence.¹ Baldwin needed to deal with the issues surrounding printing within a culturally rich and diffuse society. Therefore, he negotiates the various dangers of politics and

¹ Alexandra Halasz's *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (1997) highlights how some of the most common writing aided in educating a novice reading culture. Her analysis displays how such easily disseminated writing advanced political opinion, especially during periods of political strife or upheaval. Another useful source for understanding print as a revolutionary technology in culture and politics is Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (1983). Eisenstein marks the different technologies that affected print and focuses on the cultural influence that print held over the Renaissance and the Reformation.

religion, and through the text, he reflects the different issues associated with print culture in the early modern period. Baldwin's outspoken Protestant literary voice thrived during his early career because under the reign of Edward VI, the printed word suffered less censure, especially if it questioned the validity of Catholicism or championed Protestant politics. Though Baldwin's particular satirical voice characterizes many of his works, *Beware the Cat* shows him to be, in Stephen Gresham's words, "a man who knew the vicissitudes of the printing trade and was sensitive to publication trends, who was committed to the teaching of moral truths, and who, above all, had an affinity for literary forms and modes" (101). Baldwin's experience aids in the recognition of these trends. Moreover, his time spent producing and editing texts aids in the development a textual framework that not only operates as a patchwork of famous literary genres but also promotes an entertaining discourse while it confronts dangerous political and religious topics. Terence Bowers also indicates that Baldwin's position within print culture cannot be limited to his work as a novelist, since a majority of Baldwin's career consisted of the production and revision of texts as either a printer or an author:

[Baldwin] . . . worked as a printer, editor, translator, dramatist, poet, political and moral philosopher, and satirist. As this great range of literary activity suggest, Baldwin had intimate knowledge of the genres of the period and of the material processes of literary production. In many respects, he was a literary pioneer. (1)

Baldwin's familiarity with the process of manuscript editing and the production of print, as well as his adaptability as a writer, are illustrated in *Beware the Cat* by the text's constantly shifting narrative structure. Baldwin juggles the various duties of printer, editor, and bookseller through the marginal gloss with which Baldwin criticizes his narrator, Streamer, and takes issue with the various arguments articulated in the book. Further, many printers and booksellers were required

to market multiple forms of literature for commercial success, a practice Elizabeth Eisenstein declares mainly consisted of producing “book lists, circulars and broadsides” (*The Printing Press* 59). *Beware the Cat* features Baldwin’s familiarity with a variety of literary forms and capitalizes on both his intended audience’s knowledge of contemporary literary subject matter and the rhetoric that accompanies each of the different styles of writing. Moreover, Baldwin manages to showcase some of the freedoms of print available during the reign of Edward VI but summarily repealed after his death, among them the freedom to criticize Catholicism or to champion Protestant ideals.

Baldwin focuses *Beware the Cat* on the tension that surrounds England’s transition from a primarily oral culture to one increasingly dominated by the printed word. As Baldwin’s works suggest, the newfound availability of print in England influenced both political matters and religious practices and traditions. In the early modern period, being able to maneuver political and public discourse effectively relied upon the ability to control print, both as a resource for change and as a commodity. Alexandra Halasz reinforces the notion that “it was not print that altered the discursive field, but the interests of those who knew, used, and controlled the technology” (20). Especially in England, print became a necessary instrument for publicizing opinion and the desire for reformation. As such, print as a means to control information was readily utilized by the financially affluent, the clergy, and members of England’s government. In *Beware the Cat* Baldwin illustrates the nearly dizzying process of navigating the different textual resources available to early modern readers. While the narrative structure employed in *Beware the Cat* initially seems haphazard or confusing to the reader, Baldwin orchestrates “a highly wrought satire that playfully explores the psychological and social effects of textual and oral communication and the potential role of the printed book in society” (Bowers 3). Bowers’

analysis identifies the crux of Baldwin's narrative framework: the need to outline effective textual discourse and the power of the printed word to manipulate the reader. In large part, Baldwin's primary target in the novel is orality and its transition towards the printed word. Because oral testimony such as Streamer's narration escapes the editorial practices of books and pamphlets, Baldwin exposes it as badly reasoned and lacking the scrutiny that printed texts are subject to. To this extent, Baldwin's efforts in *Beware the Cat* showcase the importance of print as a means to spread ideology and to correct the errors of a system still in the process of transitioning away from oral discourse. Baldwin's understanding of literary genre and the inner workings of print makes *Beware the Cat* compelling as it continuously blends multiple forms of writing to attack what Baldwin views as morally wrong or rooted in a damaging brand of fiction.

Mikhail Bakhtin aids in understanding the types of discourse that Baldwin incorporates into *Beware the Cat*. The novel's main narrative always consists of two different voices that express their thoughts on the same content, but the relationship between these voices shifts between complementary and competitive. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia depends on the text interacting to create a complex discourse by the incorporation of both "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324). For *Beware the Cat*, the most visible example of heteroglossia involves the consistent overlap of the voices of Streamer and the marginal gloss. As Bakhtin mentions, one voice, by necessity, needs to reflect the intention of the author. Throughout *Beware the Cat*, the glosses represent the author's ideas, voiced by G. B., a fictionalized version of the author. At the same time, Baldwin presents the reader with Streamer, a figure who formerly controlled the dynamics of the narration. As Bakhtin later explains, the most critical elements of heteroglossia in a novel are the "*speaking person and his discourse* (332). Baldwin's rendition of this relationship is particularly useful in

understanding the author's intention to promote or even force discourse into text. Although Streamer insists on remaining uninterrupted, Baldwin later edits Streamer's oration and introduces G. B. and a collection of critically oriented marginal gloss to the host narrative. However, heteroglossia functions in another way: the constant knowledge that the author created these two distinct voices, one made to lead the narration and the other to express the author's thoughts and opinions. Further, Baldwin continues to adopt different voices throughout the novel such as when he parodies a new genre and, more interestingly, when Streamer attempts to frame a third narrative: the arguments of a society of cats. Because of Baldwin's constant shift in genres, characters (either credible or not), and a marginal gloss which competes with the host narrative, *Beware the Cat* always engages in heteroglossia.

One of the genres that Baldwin satirizes in *Beware the Cat* is the broadside ballad. These ballads often portray the mysterious or inexplicable happenings of England and utilize both images and poetic form to highlight a particular moral, or set of morals, in cautionary form. While many broadside ballads included elements of the fantastic such as witchcraft, strange creatures, and magic, they also served as a means of textual exchange that allowed a broader audience access to some of the debates that were occurring at the time. These ballads cut across class distinctions and appealed to audiences of different educational levels by using visual images, prose, and sometimes ballads to relay a single story or message.² The novel's ability to navigate between different stations and levels of education parodies the literary style of broadside ballads. One manner in which broadside ballads addressed these different audiences is the presentation of information in a variety of forms including the use of images to accompany expository text or, in other cases the addition of a shorter retelling of the events and the

² Nebeker raises a similar point and focuses on how *Beware the Cat* incorporates the same techniques ballads use to address a wide-variety of readers.

utilization of rhyme and meter, sometimes with the intention of setting the ballad to music. Still, another reason for broadside ballads' success stemmed from their availability and their "being at the junction of at least three very important features crucial for the spread of public: cheap production, wide distribution and a varied means of consumption" (4). Yet again, Baldwin's interest in broadsides stems from their availability to a public of novice readers. Because of their accessibility, Baldwin emphasizes ballads' several instances of faulty reasoning and their false sense of authority. Within *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin addresses the different tastes of potential readers, in a similar manner to broadside ballads, though he does so on a much larger scale by alternating between literary styles and by touching on multiple issues. In the first reference to a supernatural or unexplainable event in *Beware the Cat*, Streamer recalls a conversation with a servant relating both a person, the location of the event, and where the person came from: "'There was in my country,' quod he, 'a man' (the fellow was born in Staffordshire)" (11). Similar statements used in broadside ballads create a sense of validity for the information contained in them. In a similar manner, Streamer constructs authority by using similar rhetoric employed by the authors of broadside ballads to create the appearance of proof. In contradiction to the first anecdote, another companion attempts to corroborate the story and begins with the assertion that he was "another of the company, which had been in Ireland" (11). By focusing on the obvious contradictions between both stories, Baldwin refutes the assumed authority of Streamer and, through him, the rhetoric used in broadside ballads. While both stories are summarily taken by Streamer and his compatriots to be authoritative accounts, the second companion's tale insists that Grimalkin died in Ireland, thirty-three years after the death of the Grimalkin in the first story (11-12). Although the stories are revealed to be flawed by the marginal gloss because of the lack of credible or supportive information, the language used

establishes a location for the action and sometimes includes a brief introduction to the source of the ballad, which adds a layer of authority to the claim. In an actual broadside ballad related to the discovery of a different type of monstrous creature, the strategies for establishing a reliable story are similar:

A moste true and maruielous straunge wonder, the lyke hath seldom ben seene, of
[17] monstrous fishes, taken in Suffolke, at Downham bridge, within a myle of
Ipswiche. The [9th] daye of October. In the yeare of our Lorde God [1568].

(Granger 1)

The broadside ballad's author begins his with an attempt to present a real location and a somewhat recognizable time period for the broadside's topic. By mimicking the opening to many broadside ballads, Baldwin prepares the audience for the inclusion of strange ideas and occurrences. Like the literary style that he parodies, Baldwin provides outrageous examples of the supernatural, such as an Irish soldier who is pursued by a "sight of cats that, after [a] long fight with them, his boy was killed and eaten up, and he himself, as good and as swift as his horse was, had much to do to scape" (14). Still, Baldwin utilizes the same methods to set up the introduction of the main narrative with Streamer placing himself in a realistic location: "a friend's house...which, more roomish within than garish without, standeth at Saint Martin's Lane end and hang partly upon the town wall that is called Aldersgate" (9). In a similar manner, *Beware the Cat* also identifies several of Streamer's supposed listeners by name and political position. While Baldwin introduces *Beware the Cat* with the style of writing and storytelling most representative of broadsides, he initiates a narrative that questions the validity of broadside ballads and their choice of topics. Streamer's unquestioning belief in the truth of the stories he

retells and Baldwin's simultaneous suspicion of the credibility of broadside ballads, as expressed by the marginal voice, become a central component in his criticism of text as absolute authority.

In a comparable manner, Baldwin, in drawing upon supernatural sources as a major component of his narrative, reflects a knowledge about treatises concerning magic and witchcraft, many of which he would have composed and printed. While Streamer and his companions remain interested in the tale of Grimalkin, one of the listeners theorizes that the creature is most likely a witch in disguise: "witches have gone often in that likeness—and thereof hath come the proverb, as true as common, that a cat hath nine lives (that is to say, a witch may take on her a cat's body nine times)" (16) and settles the matter about that particular cat being capable of speech. Here, Streamer's logic about the nature of witchcraft imitates the ideas related in several confessions of witchcraft. As in Streamer and company's theories, a contemporary confession by Elizabeth Francis, a real woman accused of witchcraft, describes that the art of witchcraft is passed down to a female family member (Kors and Peters 229). Her confession also identifies "a white spotted cat" and describes similar abilities of witches, such as changing shape or causing others to be mysteriously transformed (229-30). Though Streamer's ideas seem ridiculous in conjunction with G. B.'s glosses, the theory that cats are directly linked to witches pervades the early modern period's circulation of print.³ Near the end of *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin reintroduces the concept of witchcraft. A large community of cats deliberates elements of cat society, a community whose conversations support many of Streamer and company's theories concerning witchcraft. Moreover, the repeated use of hearsay without

³ The *Malleus Maleficarum*, a best-selling tract on witches, provides a detailed description of how witches and their works were to be identified. It reinforces the notion of cats being especially related to witchcraft, and the types of actions Streamer details in his narrative are also present.

definitive proof highlights an even further degradation in logical thought, where rumor is able to overpower reasoned thought.

Baldwin begins *Beware the Cat* with speculation about magic and the occult, and he continues to address the fantastical but ultimately misleading information associated with pseudo-scientific texts. Baldwin's skepticism towards these sources raises questions concerning the legitimacy of these text's authoritative sources of information, especially when they contradict each other, as is the case with Streamer's companions and their anecdotes. With such focus on the occult, Baldwin essentially condemns the negative "psychological and social effects of textual and oral communication and the potential role of the printed book" to create confusion or settle upon dubious and illogical information (Bowers 3). Baldwin uses these competing types of texts to question the authority and effects of occult writing and its role in the development of textual authority during the early modern period, and he addresses the difficulty of identifying differences between occult and scientific writings during the same period.

While the first part of Streamer's narration focuses on the occult, the second part revolves around a particularly influential literary voice, Albertus Magnus, and the circulation of herbals.⁴ Herbals represented an interesting form of literature with some offering recipes for medicines and others forming the basis for biological textbooks. Some pseudo-scientific examples concentrated on alchemical formulas, though references to popular alchemical thought were not uncommon. The huge divide in the types of herbals acts as a basis for G. B.'s glosses which recognize that readers cannot distinguish between pseudo-science, occultism, and medicine. For

⁴ Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200-1280) was a famous figure for herbals, and his name was often added to the title of such books to increase their sales. Although he is remembered in literature as a central figure in alchemical studies, Albertus was also a Catholic saint, focused on medical sciences and the classification of plants, animals, and stones. Michael Best and Frank Brightman include an introduction to Albertus and separate the myths attributed to him after his death.

Albertus Magnus's works, G. B. takes a markedly respectful tone by claiming that "*Albertus Magnus teacheth many wonders*" (Baldwin 24). In contrast, G. B.'s glosses when discussing witchcraft or Catholic tales of miracles always take a negative tone and often aid in criticizing Catholic traditions: "*Witches are by nature malicious . . . witchcraft is kin to unwritten verities, for both go by traditions*" (19). During Streamer's attempts to create a potion capable of understanding the secret lives of cats, he recalls a book entitled *De Virtutibus Animalium, etc.* (24). The title, while a joke about the various titles of Albertus's works, relies upon Albertus Magnus's fame as a writer and the authority that comes with his name in the hopes of selling more books. Another text entitled *The Booke of Secretes of Albertus Magnus: of the Vertues of Herbes, Stones and Certaine Beastes* exemplifies the issue of attributing disputed works to Albertus. Like Baldwin's parodies, Albertus recounts similar concoctions, even one that, when put into "gruell, maketh the gruell to appre full of wormes and maketh the bearer . . . banquish his adversaries" (10). The recipe also includes astrological figures and divination that are similar to *Beware the Cat's* imitation of an herbal remedy.

In *Beware the Cat*, Streamer attempts to negotiate a complicated set of directions for his formula, which requires precise ingredients and devotion to astrological rules. Comically, Streamer begins by using a formula "to be able to understand birds' voices," though he also stumbles through several other steps because "[Magnus's] writing here is doubtful" (24-25). Like the broadsides, the early modern herbal attempts to establish credibility, often referring to sciences or mathematics to establish authority. Streamer attempts to assert scientific authority by including elaborate descriptions of how the philter he creates effects his health:

My mouth and my nose purged exceedingly such yellow, white, and tawny
matters as I never saw before, nor thought that any such had been in man's body.

When a pint of this gear was come forth my rheum ceased, and my head and all
my body was in exceeding good temper. (28)

However, Streamer's effort falls short of providing an accurate description of his humors and merely provides a hyperbolic account of a runny nose. The juxtaposition of the literary voices of both broadsides and herbals in Streamer's narration provides insight into an issue of early modern print society: the inability to distinguish easily the difference between occult practices and scientific formulas, or more precisely, the inability to determine whether or not a text is factual. In *Beware the Cat*, the confusion between pseudo-scientific, occult, and factually supported scientific literature is evoked by the Albertus text when Streamer interrupts the recipe with superstitious worries (Eisenstein "Printing Revolution" 142).⁵ Although entirely fictional, the text Streamer uses mirrors Albertus's approach towards medicine and the natural sciences.

Another difficulty surrounding herbals' authoritative literary voice involves their conflation of scientific and occult elements as legitimate sources of knowledge, something that Baldwin as character criticizes in his dramatic descriptions of Streamer's failure to follow the potion's formula.⁶ Streamer's confusion and later inability to follow accurately some portions of the herbal's formula parody the herbals themselves, which confuse plant names and misread sources. Streamer begins by summarizing the necessary ingredients for the philter to be a success:

If thou wilt understand . . . the voices of birds or of beasts, take two in thy
company, and upon Simon and Jude's day early in the morning, get thee with

⁵ Eisenstein elaborates in *The Printing Revolution* that this confusion between authoritative scientific texts and occult texts became a serious issue and remained unresolved until the later 1700s.

⁶ Silberman further posits that some of the misinformation surrounding texts, like herbals, revolved around the lack of consensus for terminology, measurements, and scientific/colloquial names. In such cases, translations, like what Streamer uses, become problematic because plant names and qualities changes drastically between geographic locations.

hounds into a certain wood, and the first beast that thou meetest take, and prepare with the heart of a fox, and thou shalt have thy purpose; and whosoever thou kissest shall understand them as well as thyself. (25)

Despite claiming earlier in the novel to be well read and to rely on evidence foremost, Streamer provides a recipe that can only be followed on certain days and that leaves half of the ingredients up to chance. Almost immediately, Streamer deviates from the instructions and opts “not to hunt at all,” since it “was so long to St. Jude’s Day” (25). Instead of discontinuing his attempt until he can meet the first requirement, Streamer begins to adjust the recipe to fit his own schedule. Moreover, Streamer’s determination not to participate in the hunt himself further departs from the herbal’s guidelines. By the end of his haphazard preparations for the procurement of ingredients, Streamer has even decided “that the beast which they should take was [a] hedgehog” instead of a fox (25).

In *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin also uses beast fables as an analogous method to compare and contrast many of the most prominent issues of the early modern period, especially any topics that could potentially be censored for being heretical or seditious. In the third part of his narration, Streamer reports the debate of several cats, a debate he overhears after he has finished taking the potion that allows him to understand other animals’ speech. As the cats gain an actual voice in Streamer’s narration, Baldwin begins to rely upon some of the conventions of beast fables popularized by Aesop to question issues of morality. As Adrian Johns explains, beast fables were an ideal part of an early modern child’s curriculum because “they combined moral lessons with ‘entertainment’” (Johns 407). Unlike Albertus’s herbals, beast fables join broadsides as textual artifacts designed for all classes and levels of education. Early English demand for printed texts forced prints to rely upon translations of Greek, French, and Latin texts.

Moreover, beast fables such as Aesop's were easy to understand, and they allowed the public direct access to texts that were formerly unavailable. While Aesop's tales are more obviously aimed at reforming moral values and educating a general public, Baldwin uses the beast fable as a narrative device to create a hyperbolically and comically immoral society of cats. The cats in Streamer's narration have all gathered and given praise to a collection of witches and malevolent figures, who "*the cats do worship*" (Baldwin 36). Jill Mann argues that animals act as an effective choice for the exploration of ideas that Baldwin distinguishes as moral absolutes:

They remove any expectations of psychological individuality or moral complexity. From the positive point of view, they are chosen because their actions can be assumed to be dictated by nature, and this lends a quasi-inevitability to their actions, even when they are not such as the 'natural animal' would commit.

(39)

Though traditionally beast fables avoid moral ambiguity, Baldwin utilizes the genre specifically to discuss potentially damning topics about the Catholic Church, especially in his attacks against verities and leading figures of the clergy. In the last part of Streamer's narration, a small female cat named Mouse-slayer defends herself by proclaiming various virtues that destabilize others' lives or cause general mayhem for her owners. As a character, Mouse-slayer directly relates herself to Grimalkin and the previous traits assigned to cats from Streamer's earlier narrations. Then, through her defense, she proceeds to describe several situations that satirize elements of the Catholic Church and detail both her emotional state and the reasons that justify her every action "since the blind days of [her] kitlinghood" (Baldwin 37). The satirical portions of Mouse-slayer's story focus on the years that she spent living with an old couple who were "hard to be turned from their rooted belief which they had in the Mass" (37). Though the couple asserts they

firmly believe in the Mass, their actions reveal an unfamiliar attitude towards actual church procedures and the reasons why Catholicism upholds different traditions. Like Aesop's anthropomorphized animals, Mouse-slayer's interactions with her fellow cats reveal a complex society of cats that mirror human civilization. Moreover, all of Mouse-slayer's stories follow her interactions with various human characters, with Mouse-slayer playing a pivotal role in dealing out ironic punishments to the villainous characters. Throughout Mouse-slayer's stories about human society and the superstitious nature of priests, Baldwin satirizes not only the various constructions of print society and literary tradition but the civilization that promoted a highly interactive circulation of print.⁷ Superstitions and theories concerning the intelligence of cats already exist in several mediums, including beast fables, so Baldwin's society seems less far-fetched than other suggestions, especially after Streamer's earlier summations concerning cats and witches. Coupled with some of the earlier assumptions of the novel, the marginal glosses reinforce that unlike the human society the cat society in Streamer's narration represents deviance, because after all, "*Cats are malicious*" (Baldwin 45, marginal note). By utilizing anthropomorphic figures, Baldwin makes damning statements about the Catholic Church, though his criticism is protected by the outrageousness of the situations and the fact that the story is entirely unbelievable because it relies on the testimony of a cat. Baldwin includes these anthropomorphic figures and their re-enactment of the plots from famous beast fables to further assist Baldwin in his scrutiny of both the authority of Streamer as narrator and the authority of the text as a whole. By presenting cats as a culture capable of rivaling the intricacy of human civilization, Baldwin is able to focus on potential differences between man and beast. While the

⁷ For more on Baldwin's conception of animals and especially the anthropomorphic qualities of cats, see Bruce Boehrer's *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*.

cats do display many near-human characteristics, it is their reliance on hearsay that Baldwin identifies as base and, therefore, evidence of their society's inferiority.

Baldwin's use of the beast fable acts as one of most apparent and powerful literary genres that he utilizes in *Beware the Cat*. It is important to recognize that while Baldwin introduces some very original characters that are much more developed than those found in typical beast fables, Baldwin's beast fables exhibit the influence of William Caxton's translations of *Reynard the Fox* and *Aesop's Fables*, which had been widely read. Both of these works were well-known during Baldwin's time, and their influence on *Beware the Cat* is evident as he continually revisits their plots. In his examination of *Beware the Cat*'s society of cats, who live by a set of complex rules and the decisions of a monarch, Baldwin relies upon Reynard's tales of courtroom guile and animal politics. In fact, Mouse-slayer's defense against the charges brought upon her run parallel of Reynard's own actions. Similar to Reynard's courtroom guile, Mouse-slayer supplies humorous anecdotes while raising her defense. Mouse-slayer appears before the congregation of cats to explain why a complaint was raised about her "refusing [a male cat's] lecherously offered delights" which causes her to "*purgeth herself by declaring her life*" (Baldwin 37). Mouse-slayer explains that, while all female cats are required to submit themselves sexually to any male cat, she has a good reason for refusing her accuser: She had just given birth a few days before. Not only that, but she attempted to explain to "[her accuser] withal, which he might see too by [her] belly what case," that she was unable to comply (46-7). However, "for all that [she] could say, [the male cat] would have his will," so Mouse-slayer called for help and managed to get away safely thanks to some other cats that are attending her trial (47). In an attempt to prove that she follows the law, Mouse-slayer describes the last four years of her life and how she interacted with her masters. After hearing Mouse-slayer's reasons, the cats cite a previous case that

“decreed upon that exemption, forbidding any male . . . to force any female, and that upon great penalties” (47).

In both works, religious figures are also the instruments of other characters’ misery. Baldwin rejects the subtler religious tension in Caxton’s version of *Reynard the Fox* and makes the Catholic Church a much more obvious target for criticism. In *Reynard the Fox*, a cat attacks a priest in a humorous manner as the only means of escaping from some angry priests and nuns. However, Baldwin’s retelling of this incident has Mouse-slayer attempting to warn her master that his wife has been unfaithful by leaping up and catching the priest “by the genitals with [her] teeth” (Baldwin 50). *Aesop’s Fables* are also present in Baldwin’s work, primarily in Mouse-slayer’s explanation of her actions before the trial. Her recollection of an old gentlewoman who convinced a chaste woman to sleep with a nobleman stems from Aesop’s “The Fable of the Old Harlot or Bawd,” from Caxton’s translation.⁸ In Baldwin’s retelling, he accents the figure of the old bawd by explaining that she is seemingly devout, although the only religious symbol she keeps is an image of “Our Lady in her coffer” (40).

Baldwin’s portrayal of a feline society fascinates because it revolves around an iron-clad system of laws, a system that demands possible rule-breakers be held responsible. When Streamer first discovers that he can understand the language of cats, he documents a court proceeding in which “the great grey one” (36) acts as judge. This scene, while one of the most interesting sections of Streamer’s framed narrative, is influenced by the tales of Reynard the fox, a medieval trickster figure. *Reynard the Fox* begins by introducing an animal-governed setting followed by a series of complaints made against the titular figure. After each animal has filed suit against Reynard, he is dragged to court to face his charges. While initially facing death at the

⁸ It is also evident that Baldwin followed Caxton’s translation of the fable, since Caxton mistranslated the word for dog, *catella*, as the word for cat.

gallows, Reynard's cunning and flattery are able to win him both the King and Queen's favor; the tale ends with him being able to continue his mischief, much to the chagrin of his fellow animals. Throughout *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin makes many references to moments from *Reynard the Fox*, whether by focusing on the procession of a trial run by animals or by directly borrowing a story from Reynard's tales to add comic relief to Mouse-slayer's history. Before Streamer has fully gained the ability to understand the language of animals, a trial experiment leaves him confused, because he vaguely hears a voice cry "'What Isegrim, what Isegrim'" (Baldwin 31). Isegrim refers to the primary antagonist of *Reynard the Fox*, often the butt of Reynard's mischief. Once Streamer is able to comprehend the cats' discussion, Mouse-slayer's defense and personal history follow a similar structure to Reynard's adventures, which Jill Mann describes as "episodic . . . unconnected . . . unpredictable" (229). Each of Mouse-slayer's stories mimics Reynard's episodic adventure and differs from Streamer's plot driven oration. Perhaps the most apparent influence of *Reynard the Fox* on *Beware the Cat* occurs in Mouse-slayer's tale of biting her dame's husband. In *Reynard the Fox*, the only cat mentioned, Tybert, is tricked by Reynard and, as the only available means of escape, is forced to spring "bytwene the preestes legges wyth his clawes and wyth his teeth" (Caxton 8). Baldwin adds a similar version of the tale, told from the perspective of Mouse-slayer, though this time the cat's actions are planned and intended as a means of retribution. Still, Baldwin's variation relies on the comical image of a cat catching a high-ranking individual "by the genitals with [her] teeth" (50). Utilizing *Reynard the Fox* as a precedent, Baldwin employs the idea of animals holding a trial and using humorous anecdotes as evidence, even recalling Tybert the cat's tale as an entertaining aside.

Baldwin's adaptation of Aesop's "The Fable of the Old Harlot or Bawd" is one of the most powerful tales in Mouse-slayer's collection, in part because it further explores ideas of

feminine virtue and sexuality. In Aesop's fable, a nobleman leaves for a pilgrimage leaving behind "a wyf chaste and [wondrously] fair" (122). Soon after his departure, a young man takes interest in the wife and continuously pursues her. However, as the young wife is chaste, the young man's pursuits are in vain. In a final effort, the young man approaches an old woman, who is both "wyly and malycious" (122). The old woman convinces him that she can solve his problem and rubs mustard into a small cat's nose, before she departs for the wife's home. The wife is immediately curious about the old woman's cat, which constantly cries out. The old woman then begins to convince the wife that the cat is, in fact, her daughter, and she was transformed her current, pitiable state. Upon hearing this, the wife begs to know how such a transformation could take place, and the old woman replies that it is because her daughter spurned a young man's pursuits, which drove the young man to suicide. Scared that the same thing could happen to herself, the wife decides to give in to the young man's pleas. When she next meets the young man, she no longer resists, and he is able to "fulfyll his wyll" (123).

In contrast, Baldwin's version accents the discourse among the female characters and adds the story of the young wife's deception. The tale about the old woman's daughter focuses more on the issues of physical chastity and spiritual faithfulness. In Baldwin's adaptation, the old bawd presents a letter, purported to be from the young man who was pursuing her daughter, to further convince the young wife that her story is true. The seemingly a genuine love letter is dubiously entitled "The Nameless Lover to the Nameless Beloved, in whose love, sith he may not live, he only desireth license to die" (43). Baldwin's addendums to Aesop's tale are designed to reveal the devilry involved in tricking the young wife, as well as illuminating how easy it is to deceive with a poetical tone. Moreover, the old woman adds that, within two days of the "Nameless Lover's" suicide, her daughter's former husband also passed away, an addition that is

noticeably absent from Aesop's fable. The embellishments to the old woman's argument create a more convincing reasoning for the old woman's advice, that "though God would have us keep our faith to our husbands, yet rather than any other should die for our sakes, we should not make any conscience to save their lives" (45). While Aesop clearly influenced Baldwin's work, the depth that Baldwin adds to the old woman's trickery accents the closing message of Mouse-slayer's tale: "*Let young women take heed of old bawds*" (44).

Ultimately, *Beware the Cat* employs several anti-Catholic elements. Beyond the direct satire of church officials in Mouse-slayer's tale, Baldwin attacks the Pope and traditions that are based on a time where England did not dispute the power of the Catholic Church. In *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin demonstrates an intricate knowledge of religion and how religion was being represented in the medium of print. By creating the first English novel, Baldwin joins the Protestant tradition of disrupting the Catholic Church as an organized political power that utilizes print "as a mass medium . . . for overt propaganda and agitation" (The Printing Revolution 148). Early in the novel, Baldwin alerts the reader to his political assertions about the Catholic Church and asserts that the "*Pope's clergy are crueller than cats*" and "*The Pope was a great waster*" (Baldwin 15). Many of Baldwin's distinctions up to this point reinforce that, like the flaws of Streamer's oration when presented in print, Catholicism's verities and superstitions lack credibility when examined. In his criticism of a primarily oral tradition, Baldwin also relates the most superfluous or unreliable literature to the statements and ideas of the Catholic Church. The act of transubstantiation is also criticized in Streamer's narration and compared to the alchemical processes of Albertus's texts. In his criticism, G. B., the marginal voice, declares that, by actually consuming the body of Christ, "*Transubstantiators destroy Christ's manhood*" (17). Perhaps the largest target of Baldwin's ire are unwritten verities--"the veneration of saints, the celibacy of the

clergy, the conduct of church services in Latin instead of in the vernacular, even the celebration of the Mass itself, especially the attribution to it of any immediately practical efficacy” (Ringler Jr. 117). The dubiousness of the different verities is comparable to the rumors of the earlier narratives and similar to the unbelievable and unfounded claims of the broadside ballads. In his damnation of Catholic traditions, even to the point where they are antithetical to the public’s well-being, G. B. comments that “*Witchcraft is kin to unwritten verities, for both go by traditions*” (Baldwin 19). As Streamer begins to establish in the first part of the narrative, witchcraft and other occult matters exist outside of logical explanation. Baldwin reinforces the relationship between unwritten verities and witchcraft and then damns the verities as similar to occult matters, but he does so without real explanation. In the same manner that Baldwin questions the authority of Streamer and his companions, *Beware the Cat* questions the reliance upon a tradition that is similarly disputable, like unwritten verities. Moreover, the language that Baldwin uses to compare both Catholicism and witchcraft identifies the Catholic Church’s operations in England as misleading and devilish. Baldwin most effectively creates these correlations by juxtaposing stories of witchcraft and magic with complaints against the Catholic Church and assertions that both are heavily steeped in tradition and, ultimately, antithetical to progress. Finally, Baldwin’s representations of Catholic characters—whether in his description of the Pope and clergy or in the character of the old woman in Mouse-slayer’s tale—reinforce the notion that Catholicism revolves around deceit. It is this psychological dependency that Baldwin fixates upon in his condemnation of the Catholic Church as a criminal organization devoted to misleading the public.

Baldwin also frames *Beware the Cat* alongside several paratextual artifacts, including a woodcut illustration, a note to the reader, a dedicatory epistle, and an exhortation and hymn.⁹ These paratexts aid Baldwin's assertions that his text stems from fact and also reinforce the dual status of the text as both oral and written. In the 1570 manuscript of *Beware the Cat*, a woodcut illustration marked the first page of the text, though the woodcut bears no influence or resemblance to the text and its discourse. A later reprinting of *Beware the Cat* included a translator's note to the reader explaining that the events of the Counter Reformation dissuaded printers from running another printing of Baldwin's text. Baldwin's "Epistle Dedicatory" acts as a formal letter to one of Baldwin's supporters and also marks where Baldwin instead signs his name as Guillaume Baldwin. In the 1570 manuscript, Baldwin further utilizes his editorial knowledge to make his text credible by drafting the "Epistle Dedicatory" in a completely different style of lettering.¹⁰ Although the rest of *Beware the Cat* is printed in black-letter, the letter to Baldwin's sponsor shifts to white-letter. For the early modern reading audience, the lettering marks a significant difference in tone. Most government postings, religious treatises, and letters were drafted in white-letter, which was viewed as more prestigious and important. In contrast, black-letter was seen as the lettering for more common readings such as herbals, most novels, and broadside ballads, because it resembles handwriting. The effect of these different types of lettering is to reinforce the concept of heteroglossia in the text by introducing Baldwin, the printer, as another voice in the novel's discourse. The last paratextual elements of *Beware the Cat* resemble the final remarks of broadside ballads by explaining in simplistic terms what the

⁹ While I discuss paratexts as they continue to frame the novel as authoritative, paratexts also acted to inform the reader about any issues that may have occurred during the printing process. While Baldwin's text does not contain these types of paratext, see Helen Smith for further information on how these influenced the printing industry.

¹⁰ *English in Print from Caxton to Shakespeare to Milton* by Valerie Hotchkiss and Fred Robinson explores lettering and the physical image of the early modern text in much greater detail. Hotchkiss and Robinson also note more specific changes to the aesthetics of print from the beginning of the Renaissance to the end of the Reformation.

reader should learn from the text and finishing the text with a humorous poem that highlights some of the author's intentions for writing the text.

Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* parodies early modern England's literary tradition to address the issues of several of the most common texts available to readers. Baldwin absorbs these forms to construct a multi-faceted argument against misinformation in occult writing, printed hearsay, and the writings of the Catholic Church. In the construction of Streamer's narrative, Baldwin layers his storytelling by relying first on the most public and easily recognizable literary genres, the broadside ballads. In the second part of the oration, Baldwin progresses from occult writings and arguments of hearsay to some of the more scientific and fact-driven texts. However, Baldwin's portrayal of these texts reveals that they are subject to the same flaws of occult writings and often ruin arguments with ideas unrelated to science and instead based on superstition. In the final part of the narrative, Baldwin introduces a more navigable literary style for a novice readership into *Beware the Cat*. He leaves behind direct references to the occult and pseudo-science and moves towards beast fables and religious writings that combat the intricacies of the Catholic Church. However, Baldwin's chief purpose in establishing an ever-changing narrative infused by all of the most common literary genres is to frame a conversation about textual authority. While Baldwin frames the text through a forced heteroglossal exchange by constantly presenting arguments through different genre-inspired lenses, *Beware the Cat* acts as a caution to novice readers about the fallacious logic being perpetuated in a society growing more dominated by the printed word.

“I KNOW WHAT I KNOW”: ISSUES OF TEXTUAL AUTHORITY AND DISCOURSE

In *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin explores issues of oral, textual, religious, and political authority. Throughout the text, he implements a corrupt and often hypocritical manner of argumentation. He does this by using many of the most common modes for convincing Early Modern readers of the authority of a text. *Beware the Cat* demonstrates that these methods often prove fallacious when presented to a potentially uneducated readership. Baldwin approaches the question of authority in the text by confounding the reader as to whether Gregory Streamer, the self-proclaimed narrator, or William Baldwin, the author of the novel, acts as the primary narrative force throughout the novel. Moreover, William Baldwin, as a figure influencing the text, is best understood in the context of his other role: the editor, commenter, and witness of Gregory Streamer's narration, Gulielmus Baldwin (G. B.). The largest form of authoritative tension stems from Baldwin's intra-textual discourse because the author uses the marginal glosses in *Beware the Cat* as more than a tool for textual clarification. As the author of the marginal gloss, G. B., functions like another character, one capable of disagreeing with the direction of Streamer's narrative in order to suggest a different perspective. In effect, it is the marginal voice that clarifies most of Streamer's arguments and either supports or disrupts the validity of his ideas. The marginal gloss also succeeds in parodying the customary uses of gloss during the early modern period, specifically in its tendency to overlap and destabilize the primary text. However, through satire Baldwin reveals that there is no particular hierarchy between the text and his marginal gloss. Instead, *Beware the Cat* only becomes navigable by reading both Streamer's narrative and G.B.'s marginal comments in conjunction with each other. While Streamer performs his role as the uninterrupted narrator throughout the text, Baldwin's marginal gloss subverts his authority and shows that Streamer misleads both those listening to

his narrative and the potential readers of the G.B.'s retelling of the original narrative. By extension, Baldwin utilizes other aesthetic tools of the print industry, such as font and lettering, in order to create an image of authority. The sources that Baldwin draws from also lend credibility to his writing. By manipulating these editorial and print practices, therefore, Baldwin emphasizes the issues surrounding the reliability of print, which at the time occupied a transitional state. The evolution from spoken word to manuscript to printed text and a new set of authoritative strategies were being encountered by a culture of novice readers for the first time.

At the beginning of *Beware the Cat*, Gregory Streamer is introduced as a well-learned editor and translator. All in attendance wish to glean some knowledge from his experiences, since his knowledge comes from more than "hearsay of some philosophers [he knows]" (6). Streamer's authority stems from his determination to provide thorough evidence through his own scientific methods and reasoning. Baldwin introduces Streamer as a narrator interested in "affirming that beast and fowls [have] reason, and that as much as men, yea, and in some points more" (6). The only requirement Streamer establishes for his companions who seek his knowledge is that they not interrupt him at any point during his narration:

If . . . you could be content to hear me, and without any interruption till I have done mark what I say, I would tell you such a story of one piece of mine own experimenting as should both make you wonder and put you out of doubt concerning this matter; but this I promise you afore, if I do tell it, that as soon as any man curiously interrupteth me, I will leave off and not speak one word more.

(Baldwin 6-7)

This requirement is critical to understanding the relationship between Streamer, as an *uninterrupted* narrator, and G.B.'s marginal gloss, which is acting in response to Streamer's

narration. The marginal gloss, while not technically interrupting, is a highly critical and inquisitive voice that constantly diverts the reader towards its critique of the narrator's most fallacious opinions. Rather than listen unquestioningly, G. B. interrupts the flow of the first page of the narration and draws immediate attention towards the marginal gloss. G.B.'s first glossing questions why Streamer spends so much time listing names like Moorgate, Newgate, Ludgate, Aldgate, and Cripplegate. Essentially, G.B.'s glosses interrupt the flow of the narration as Streamer introduces each gate:

Why Moorgate.

Why Newgate.

Why Ludgate.

Why Aldgate.

Why Cripplegate. (Baldwin 9)

By immediately disrupting the narrative's movement, G. B. sets the tone for the relationship between the originally uninterrupted host narrative and G.B.'s marginal voice throughout the rest of the novel. The early interruptions also highlight Streamer's inadequacies as a factual narrator. These names would seem nonsensical to a London audience. G.B.'s marginal gloss, if only for the first section of the narrative, attempts to follow along with Streamer's background knowledge. Although Edward Bonahue Jr. argues that these glosses are simplistic in nature and "do not seem out of place" from the host narrative (294), The glosses gradually escalate and transition from simplistic overviews of the narrative to in-depth commentary and, finally, active criticism of Streamer as a narrator.

Due to the abundance of marginal writing and its overall influence on the host narrative, one of the most notable characteristics of *Beware the Cat* as a text is Baldwin's extensive use of

marginal gloss outside of its traditional role of providing a summary of key points. Although many texts during Baldwin's time utilized marginalia, few employed it as extensively and as creatively as he does in *Beware the Cat*. While Bonahue argues that in all texts that include marginal writing, "the reader must decide what relations the sidenotes bear to the host text" (293), Baldwin's format actually establishes that the marginal gloss and the narrative are inseparable and equal for the sake of relaying the text's information and authority. Traditionally, marginal writing had very specific uses within narration. As Heidi Hackel contends, marginal writing was utilized to "define an audience, protect the author's meaning, and forward particular habits of reading" (127). However, Hackel later points out that the traditional format of marginal gloss also potentially counteracts any in-depth reading practices by making "texts vulnerable to different interpretations and less attentive habits of reading" (127). Unlike traditional marginal writing, G.B.'s marginal gloss challenges the reader to confront both the marginal writing and the host narrative. Moreover, G.B.'s glossing pushes for readers to adopt reading practices that ultimately question the validity of narratives based on the evidence and logic that it presents throughout its argument. Terence Bowers argues for a similar understanding of Baldwin's implementation of marginal writing. In contrast to traditional gloss, Baldwin's attempts serve "less to explicate the text, or to provide further examples and amplifications, than to highlight the reading process" (14). Instead of compartmentalizing marginal glosses as an explanatory tool for the uninformed reader, G.B.'s voice supplements the narrative and interacts in a reactionary manner to Streamer's claims and criticisms. Rather than compelling the reader to accentuate one particular reading of the text, the marginal gloss in G.B.'s voice demonstrates effective reading practices, encouraging questions and criticisms. Moreover, the type of reading that Baldwin pushes for by making the host narrative and the marginal gloss contend with each other for

authority is coupled with the overarching satiric nature of the text. The effect requires readers to continue to question and reconsider the reliability of the text and its narrator. Jane Griffiths contends that the text exemplifies “the dangers of accepting the stability of the printed word at face value, and [explains] that [*Beware the Cat*] does so partly through the use of actively misleading glossing” (15). Baldwin’s use of gloss and the creation of a fictionalized Baldwin in the text develop the reader’s understanding of the host narrative and destabilize the notion that the novel is comprehensible when taken at face value. By the end of the novel, it is clear that in *Beware the Cat* Baldwin broadens the creative scope of marginal gloss by utilizing the marginal text as an active character that shapes how the reader understands Streamer and his narrative.

William Baldwin employs *Beware the Cat* as a tool for identifying contradictory ideas and statements. The issue of disagreement throughout the novel remains central to comprehending the types of arguments that occupy Streamer and his listeners. While Streamer proposes one particular view of the narrative, G. B. suggests alternative readings of each of the novel’s primary issues through the marginal gloss. As such, *Beware the Cat* acts as a comprehensive list of Reformation arguments and disagreements. Beyond Baldwin’s aims of criticizing Catholicism, the text also serves to address issues of politics, ideas of religious reform, and the nature of the written text, especially as a growing instrument in creating public opinion. Although initially Guillaume presents himself as a sincere supporter of Streamer’s narrative voice, G.B.’s glosses become increasingly antagonistic toward Streamer’s authority. Streamer as a narrator focuses on unveiling the mysteries of the world and on disputing many commonly held assumptions. Conversely, Baldwin controls the text and, ultimately, the reliability of Streamer. Baldwin (the author) manages Streamer by correcting his mistakes and hypocritical elements through G. B. and his marginal gloss. Moreover, Baldwin relies upon the

outrageousness of some of Streamer's babbling, including his entirely made-up and unsupported history of the gates of London, to highlight to readers that Streamer lacks authority as a factual narrative figure. Through Streamer and G.B.'s constant disagreement within the text, it is clear that Baldwin and Streamer belong to two very different epistemological camps. Bowers identifies the contention between both figures as a difference between what each figure considers as the basis for authoritative knowledge:

In the argument, Streamer, the main character and narrator, disagrees with the author over what constitutes authoritative knowledge: the former insists on the authority of experience . . . the later on that of the authors Embodied in this rather ridiculous question about animals, then, is an important debate concerning different notions about the ground and nature of our knowledge—one sense-based, the other text-based. (4)

While Bowers outlines a critical difference between Baldwin and his narrator, a more important separation stems from Streamer's inability to engage critically any of the information that casts doubt upon his claims. Moreover, Streamer's lack of critical engagement identifies another of Baldwin's concerns about the nature of written discourse: being able to differentiate between good and bad evidence. As such, G.B.'s marginal gloss controls Streamer's ramblings and attempts to verify the narrator's credibility by examining the types of information Streamer values as authoritative and linking them to Streamer's own musings corruption and hypocrisy. Baldwin's chief concern in the novel strays from completely controlling Streamer as a narrator. His intention focuses on informing readers that they must examine ideas critically and not be trapped into accepting the ideas of orators or authors as infallible. Instead, Baldwin cautions the reader to avoid alleging "authorities out of authors" (5). To this extent, Baldwin's use of

marginal gloss throughout *Beware the Cat* focuses more on confronting Streamer's various shortcomings as a narrator and showing how these shortcomings perpetuate faulty reasoning.

One of the most apparent cases of Streamer's inability to process contentious information occurs within the first section of the narrative. After Streamer announces that the focus of his study on animals speaking will settle on cats, he goes into great detail to describe a feline creature with supernatural characteristics named Grimalkin. Streamer's evidence to support the existence of both Grimalkin and a language among cats comes from conversations he had with a servant from a friend's household and a soldier stationed in Ireland whose stories occurred around the same time. Both of these witnesses claim to know of people who heard cats speak about the passing of Grimalkin. Despite claiming that he only develops his opinions based on "not only what by hearsay of some philosophers [he knows], but what [he himself has] proved," Streamer gets all his information from a soldier and a servant passing on hearsay (Baldwin 6). The veracity of these witnesses is doubtful, since their accounts of Grimalkin's death are very different. In the servant's account, a man born in Staffordshire encountered a strange cat which exclaimed that the man should "commend [him] unto Titton Tatton and to Puss thy Catton, and tell her that Grimalkin is dead" (11). When the man returned home and repeated the message to his wife, a young kitten that they were raising responded to the message and left the household shortly afterward. The soldier gets his tale from a young churl he knew who told him a story of a man and his page who met a grisly end for killing a monster cat. The two men began eating their dinner late one night when "there came in a cat and set her by [one of the men], and said in Irish, 'Shane foel,' which is, 'give me some meat' (13). The cat proceeded to devour all the food that the men brought with them. Although the monstrous cat ate a ludicrous amount of food, it repeatedly asks for more servings. Before the men realized it, the cat had consumed all of their

available food and so, in anger, the man killed the cat. In response, the two were besieged by “such a sight of cats that, after long fight with them, [the] boy was killed and eaten up” (14). The cat continued to chase after the man and somehow managed to keep up with him even though he was on horseback. After the man eluded the pursuing cats and arrived home, he told his wife the tale only to have his housecat attack and kill him.

Despite the fantastic and very different nature of both tales, Streamer convinces himself that both stories revolve around the same monster cat: Grimalkin. However, the servant supposedly told his tale approximately forty years earlier, though the servant hesitates when pressed for a more specific date. Similarly, the soldier recalls that his version stems from an observation that is also nearly forty years old. When Streamer begins to explain how two very different stories about one cat’s death could be passed along such a great distance, he asserts that just as foreign information is passed along via ships, there are many ships that “have cats belonging unto them, which bring news unto their fellows out of all quarters” (14). At Streamer’s logic, G.B.’s gloss criticizes that such is “*a very strange conjecture*” (14). G.B.’s criticism of Streamer’s thoughts marks the first clear moment where the host narrative and marginal gloss share a different opinion regarding what constitutes a credible account. The two stories stem from unreliable sources, and both of Streamer’s witnesses only know the stories through hearsay. Moreover, both stories lack a clear timeline and differ greatly in how the cats behaved. Streamer’s blind acceptance of hearsay and all the questionable content from each story emphasize his to his inability to read (or listen) critically.

Throughout *Beware the Cat*, Baldwin constantly disputes the absolute authority of the Catholic Church and the unrefuted authority of occult writings, but the most interesting battle of wills occurs between Streamer as the main narrative force and G. B. as the editor of Streamer’s

narrative and voice of the text's marginal gloss. Throughout the novel, G. B. and Streamer compete for textual authority, with Streamer attempting to retain absolute power over the course of the narration, and G. B. trying to unveil Streamer's reasoning as both farcical and representative of an out of date viewpoint regarding what constitutes expertise. Bonahue Jr. points out that although *Beware the Cat* acts as a singular text, Baldwin intentionally fragments it into several distinct parts:

A reader . . . encounters a distinctive title page . . . next comes a dedicatory letter addressed by the author to the courtier John Young, followed by an authorial memoir labeled "The Argument." These prefatory items introduce the main narrative, an "Oration" in three parts by a fictional Master Streamer.

Accompanying Master Streamer's report is an extensive marginal gloss, evidently written by the author. Then, after the Oration, the author explicitly resumes responsibility for the text, offering a didactic "Exhortation" in prose addressed to the reader, and he concludes . . . by transcribing a verse "Hymn," reportedly of Streamer's making. (285)

Bonahue Jr. recognizes the fragmented nature of the text by declaring that "each element not only operates as a self-contained entity but also, in its provisional independence, marks a narrative border to be confronted and crossed by the reader pursuing a course through the textual data" (285). Bonahue Jr. is correct in his assertion that each of *Beware the Cat*'s individual writings work together to create a more complicated narrative. However, *Beware the Cat*'s complex narrative framework also accomplishes Baldwin's goal of pressing early modern readers to become more critical evaluators of text. Baldwin's framework, while challenging readers to explore the discourse between each of the pieces of writing that make up *Beware the*

Cat, also displays what Griffiths describes as “a concern for the social health of [Baldwin’s] country that manifests itself through [his] linking of the questions of religious reform and the state of writing and publishing” (15-16). By criticizing the Roman Catholic Church’s traditions and exploring the early modern period’s definition of textual authority through the complicated discourse between Streamer and G.B., *Beware the Cat* displays a marked interest in pushing a reading public to join the discourse and develop a sense for fallacious reasoning and writing. The fragmented nature of the text, when viewed as individual parts, also supports Baldwin’s resistance to establishing a singular authoritative narrative voice. Instead, these elements serve to destabilize the traditional methods of authorizing print by undercutting each other’s ideas and language.

Streamer takes on the role of narrator and directs the arguments in the text by showcasing some of the most popular viewpoints concerning the novel’s major issues. However, Streamer’s authority throughout the text relies upon an unquestioned expertise in most scientific or literary matters, and the reliability of his “Oration” depends on it remaining uninterrupted and, therefore, less prone to critical inquiries. Therefore, Streamer’s authority and expertise within the “Oration” succeed solely as oral artifacts, because the listeners cannot inquire further into any of Streamer’s shortcomings. Within the prefatory “Argument,” Streamer makes his audience agree that “as soon as any man curiously interrupteth me, [he] will leave off and not speak one word more” (6-7). The uninterrupted nature of the “Oration” creates the image of a single unpausing narrative relayed late at night. Bonahue Jr. claims that Streamer’s authority declines throughout the text, because of his narrative style and “tendency to meander over the textual landscape” (289). However, Streamer is not meandering; he strives to achieve a particular rhetorical effect. While Streamer bombards his listeners with information and deviates from his original questions

and claims, he limits his audience's ability to criticize his oration. Moreover, Streamer's habit of adopting the same rhetorical language of the occult writings he dismisses in the earlier sections of his narrative aids in alerting the reader to the hypocritical nature of both his style of argumentation and the types of ideas he submits as factual. While Streamer's negative oratory habits are dismissed or unnoticed by his listeners, G.B.'s rearrangement of the oration into text allows readers to notice more easily Streamer's discrepancies. Bonahue Jr. agrees that Streamer's oration falls short of reliability when transposed into a printed format. Throughout *Beware the Cat*, Streamer's narrative jumps between various subjects as he encounters them, often at the cost of departing his original story or claim: the history of London's gates (9); the waste of the Catholic Church (15); issues of transubstantiation (18); and his own theories regarding astronomy (35). Stylistically, Streamer's wandering narrative resembles the halting nature of an actual oration, but textually Streamer's tangential arguments and inability to examine fully his main topics reveal that the narrative relies on an overtly disjointed and misleading narrator. Streamer's only other authoritative claim in the text stems from his appearance as a wise and well-learned man. Further, the narration reinforces Streamer's position as a potentially reliable figure by making him seem affluent amongst real members of England's aristocracy and framing him as a notorious translator of foreign texts. Bonahue Jr. makes a similar claim about the authoritative benefits of linking Streamer with nobility:

By linking Streamer so closely to actual attendants at court, Baldwin introduces his protagonist under the guise of objective history From the perspective of the contemporary reader, each courtier, as a participant, could serve as an eyewitness capable of corroborating the conversation that fancifully took place on the given evening. (289)

For Bonahue Jr., Baldwin's characterization of Streamer as an upper-class scholar lends credibility to Streamer's narrative. Moreover, the act of corroboration in *Beware the Cat* supplements Streamer's idiosyncrasies because his listeners are similarly well-known and educated. Throughout the text, Streamer relies freely on this idea of corroboration to complement the unbelievable nature of his oration as a cohesive whole. Despite Streamer's attempts to rely on corroboration for the majority of the narration, G. B. highlights in the marginal gloss that the narrator's evidence consists of hearsay from uneducated strangers. During his exploration of Grimalkin, Streamer unquestioningly believes the account of an unnamed "churl" (14) and ignores the lack of verification from other sources. Streamer's abuse of his corroborating sources first enlightens the reader to the unreliable nature of Streamer in the context of his methods of experimentation and the content of his narration.

In contrast, William Baldwin's character in *Beware the Cat*, Gulielmus Baldwin the glosser, gains his authority through his capacity as the literal editor of Streamer's narration. He takes responsibility for the text's framework and reveals his tendency to undercut Streamer as both a reliable narrator and a knowledgeable figure. In the "Epistle Dedicatory," written by G. B. to the courtier John Young, he recounts that he has "so nearly used both the order and words of [he] that spake them" (3). The claim is intended to convince those who originally listened to the account that the text was written by Streamer himself. Though G. B. claims that he has honestly rewritten Streamer's narration to the best of his abilities, he admits that he has doubts as to "whether Master Streamer will be contented that other men plow with his oxen" (3). G. B. reports Streamer's oration, but he acts primarily as an editor of a previously produced text. As such, G. B. performs in multiple roles in the text by serving as the textual organizer and editor of Streamer's narration and as another character in the text who is party to Streamer's original

oration. Streamer's "uninterrupted" narration becomes unstable in its textual reproduction. Bowers does not note, even though Streamer's narration precedes Baldwin's text that the marginal glosses provided showcase that "in textual form . . . the author can and does question Streamer" (14). The ability to question and interact with Streamer's narrative marks a critical difference between the original oration and its textual reproduction by highlighting the importance of examining such narratives for fallacious reasoning instead of listening without interruption. Bonahue Jr. contends that the production of Baldwin's text reveals his effort "to make Streamer's oral discourse more 'booklike'" (Bonahue Jr. 291). Bonahue Jr. suggests the marginal glosses and para-texts attempt to make Streamer's narrative less like an oration, but the marginal glosses also indicate Baldwin's efforts to introduce actual discourse into Streamer's narrative. In textual form, Baldwin emphasizes Streamer's fallible nature with G.B.'s marginal glosses.

During the second part of Streamer's oration, Baldwin provides a particular example of marginal gloss that combats the narrator and focuses on Streamer's tendency towards hypocrisy. While Streamer begins to recount how he developed a formula for understanding the language of animals, he takes careful note that the success of the philter hinges on fulfilling each step "upon Simon and Jude's day early in the morning" (25). While considering the steps necessary for creating his philter, Streamer rejects the steps outlined in Magnus's recipe, opting instead for steps that are more convenient and require less patience and preparation. Streamer's provides a series of excuses for why he can avoid both the necessary date and the basic steps of procuring the ingredients himself:

Because [Albertus's] writing here is doubtful, because he saith "quoddam nemus," a certain wood, and because I knew three men not many years past

which, while they went about this hunting were so 'fraid, whether with an evil spirit or with their own imagination I cannot tell . . . came with their hair standing on end and . . . have been the worse ever since, and their hounds likewise; and seeing it was so long to St. Jude's day, therefore I determined not to hunt at all.

(25)

Instead, Streamer avoids taking part in most of the work and requests ingredients from any hunters that he encounters. Later during the day, Streamer reveals his own hypocrisy by decrying the superstitious habits of a group of hunters, because they attacked him for suggesting they hunt for an unlucky animal (26). Despite displaying a keen interest in astrology and attempting, though only for a moment, to follow the directions of the philter by observing the appropriate date, Streamer declares that the hunters deserve punishment. He claims they follow the “wicked, superstitious observations of foolish hunters” and believes they “have no true belief in God's providence” (26). Streamer's earlier reasons for not hunting also present an example of his hypocritical nature. One of his chief reasons for avoiding the wood entirely stemmed from his fear of whatever made “*men and dogs 'fraid out of their wits in proving an experiment*” (25). Further, Streamer declares that such superstitions and the punishment Streamer received mimic the actions of “the papists, which for speaking of good and true words punish good and honest men” (26). G. B. agrees with Streamer's comparison and derisive behavior by supplying that “*superstitious hunters are kin to the papists*” (26). Streamer complains about the hunters and their habits, and G. B. supports his claims; however, G. B. provides a clear criticism of both the hunters and Streamer's earlier actions: “*To observe times, days, or words argueth infidelity*” (26). Although G. B. holds similar criticisms to Streamer for the acts of the hunters, the marginal gloss similarly pinpoints one of Streamer's most glaring moments of hypocrisy.

The format of text and marginal gloss also affect characters' claims for credibility. Although Baldwin directly interacts with the main text through small exhortations and criticisms as G.B., the oration and marginal gloss and their collaboration in the text serve as what Bonahue Jr. identifies as "the *raison d'être* of Baldwin's work" (292). While it is true that these very different texts and their interaction acts separate *Beware the Cat* from most other texts at the time, Baldwin's *raison d'être* focuses more on how the host narrative and gloss encourages readers to become stricter in their examination and consuming of text. Still, Streamer's oration and G.B.'s marginal commentary make up the largest textual components of *Beware the Cat*. Unlike some of the novel's para-textual elements, the gloss and host narrative cannot operate as separate texts. G.B.'s marginal glosses act to clarify Streamer's incomprehensible claims and actions and as a means of alerting readers to disagreements with the host narrative, something Bowers identifies the phenomenon in the context of G. B.'s desire to provide the audience "cues to critical thinking" and "another point of view" (14). However, unlike the marginal writing utilized in other Renaissance texts, Baldwin's marginal gloss counteracts the absolute authority of the main text, providing, instead, skeptical remarks about the validity of the narrator and his use of sources. The interconnected nature of the text and marginal gloss further portray the differences between oral and print tradition. While Streamer's "Oration" remains uninterrupted by its listeners and provides no clear opportunities to criticize the stories or the logic used within them, *Beware the Cat* as a textual artifact emphasizes the need to evaluate texts. The marginal gloss inserts G.B.'s thoughts and positions into the narrative framework. Baldwin reinforces the notion that textual sources, unlike an oratory performances, need to be scrutinized by well-read, learned readers so they can avoid falling prey to dominating and questionable authorial voices and their potentially fallacious ideas.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Beware the Cat*'s marginal gloss is that it directly interacts with the characterization process, particularly by assisting readers in their assessment of Streamer as an authoritative voice. Streamer's insistence that his storytelling remain uninterrupted reveals that his ability to persuade listeners diminishes with critical inquiry or the possibility of pausing to reflect on the story matter. Bowers supports this notion by claiming that Streamer's "effectiveness in persuading his listeners depends on keeping his narrative going to prevent [his listeners] from closely examining it" (14). For Bowers, Streamer acts as the principal storyteller throughout the novel and, by far, the loudest voice in each section of the narrative. But it is also true that Streamer "unconsciously reveals himself as a pompous fool" with the outrageousness of his scientific ideas and the unbelievable nature of his narrative as a whole (Ringler Jr. 122-23). In his attempts to seem highly educated, Streamer proceeds to overwhelm the listener with "Latin quotations and pedantic bits of esoteric learning" (123). Despite being described as a famous figure for translations, Streamer--like his exclamation--is ludicrously wrong and either misuses Latin words or concocts incomprehensible mash-ups of famous quotes. However, *Beware the Cat*'s marginal gloss acts as both a buffer for Streamer's uninterrupted narration and as a means of deciphering the text's plot and meaning. While G. B. provides commentary throughout the narrative, his marginalia assists in characterizing Streamer as a narrator. Early in the text, G. B. chastises Streamer's brazen perception of himself, as one of "the best-learned alive." He then continues, "*The best learned are not the greatest boasters*" (20). In his attempts to question Streamer's absolute narrative, Baldwin consistently focuses on some of Streamer's most outrageous claims. In one case, G. B. expresses curiosity about Streamer's dispute towards a commonly held astronomical theory, purporting instead an erroneous substitution. At the same time Streamer attempts to recreate a philter he has read about

in on of Albertus Magnus' herbals, he reveals an ineptitude for basic astronomy by claiming that "at twelve of the clock . . . the sun began his planetical dominion" (28). Although Streamer's earlier showcasing of astrological signs displays he carries some knowledge of the subject, the reader is alerted to Streamer's fallacy by G.B.'s glib response: "*Master Streamer varieth from the astronomers in his planet hours*" (28). Instead of confessing that he has made the mistake of sleeping in, Streamer asserts that he awoke promptly, all in an attempt to preserve the false image of his self-proclaimed studious lifestyle. Similarly, Streamer continues to make outrageous astrological claims, in one example disagreeing with astronomers about the very nature of the moon:

All our ancestors have failed in knowledge of natural cases; for it is not the moon that causeth the sea to ebb and flow, neither to neap and spring, but the neaping and springing of the sea is the cause of the moon's both waxing and waning. For the moonlight is nothing save the shining of the sun cast into the element by opposition of the sea. (35)

Despite the ludicrous nature of Streamer's claim, and the pompous manner he uses to express his difference of opinion, G.B.'s gloss only mockingly sides that all "*astronomers are deceived*" (35). When Streamer is experiencing the magical effects of his potion, G. B. emphasizes the absurdity of Streamer's style of narration as he reports to be able to hear the "mounting of groins, whispering of lovers, springing of plovers, groaning and spewing, baking and brewing, scratching and rubbing, watching and shrugging" (32). Amused by Streamer's descent into unnecessary rhyming, G. B. glosses that "*here the poetical fury came upon him*" (32). Although Baldwin implements glossing in *Beware the Cat* to clarify some of the bizarre statements of

Streamer's narration and theories, the marginal commentary also accentuates Streamer's increasingly apparent irresponsibility as an unbiased and factual narrator.

One of the most striking cases of contradictory discourse within *Beware the Cat* occurs during Streamer's exploration of religious authority. The same issues of textual reliability between Streamer and G.B.'s discourse complicate their debates regarding religious authority especially when the claims are made by the Catholic Church. In the third part of Streamer's narrative, Mouse-slayer, a cat that Streamer can understand after he consumes a magical potion, takes up the mantle of narrator. While she provides details about the past few years of her life, Mouse-slayer regales several of the listening cats with a tale about a wandering priest who seemingly heals an old woman from her blindness. Robert Maslen argues that the timing of the healing aligns with "the precise point of the Mass . . . the moment when . . . bread became flesh" (6). In Mouse-slayer's example, the importance of the time reinforces a trend throughout the novel of concentrating on specific hours and dates. Baldwin constructs Mouse-slayer's tale to recall Streamer and G. B.'s earlier arguments on matters of astrology and the observation of days. In doing so the cat infers that many of the practices of the Catholic Church bear a striking resemblance to superstitious habits. While Mouse-slayer initially frames the healing as "a mighty miracle," G. B. in the glosses and several of the listening cats remain suspicious about the miraculous nature of the healing. One of the cats posits that the healing could also be "a mischievous subtlety of a magistical minister" (Baldwin 39). The marginal gloss reveals G.B.'s shared suspicions: "*sorcerers may make folk blind*" (39). Here, G. B. reinforces both the concepts that Catholic practices and the occult share similarities as well as the notion that the miracle is merely a trick being performed by the priest. Moreover, the cats question Mouse-slayer about if she has been able to cure her kittens' blindness by attempting to repeat the

miracle, but Mouse-slayer remarks that her testing as to whether or not the Mass has the power to heal reveals that her “kitlings saw naught the better, but rather the worse” (39). Just as G. B. questions Streamer’s authority in the gloss, Baldwin encourages the same level of scrutiny towards all textual matters, especially in regards to religious studies.

William Baldwin’s *Beware the Cat* illustrates some of the most common examples of how writers authorize their narrators and narratives. In Streamer and G.B.’s heteroglossal discourse, however, Baldwin creates a text that navigates complicated issues of political, religious, and textual authority. The disagreements between the host narrative and the marginal glosses also highlight an in-depth reading process that encourages critical thinking and an exploration of what constitutes credible evidence for authorial claims. The novel’s unique framework promotes these reading strategies, especially as it manipulates several complex early modern arguments. These include question of both how texts are authorized and how they require a closer examination of evidence and reasoning than oral performance does. While Baldwin acts as the author of the text, his creation of a fictionalized Baldwin (G.B.) helps him distinguish between oral and print communication. G.B.’s authority stems from the prefatory material and the inclusion of other para-textual documents, but the most striking examples of the fictionalized Baldwin affecting the text still revolve around the continuous discourse between the marginal glosses and Streamer’s narrative. Ultimately, Baldwin’s intimate understanding of textual discourse, especially in textual design and the editing of writing, highlights the greatest literary contribution of *Beware the Cat*: a complex discourse of intra-textual interactions that confront some of the main issues of early modern England’s growing print industry and that address the plight of a growing public readership as it seeks to engage the wider, and more widely varied, world of textual production.

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